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## THE REOPENING OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM.

THE Metropolitan Museum is again open to the public. The chief attraction of the new season is found to be the altar-piece ascribed to Luca della Robbia, of which we have already published a description; and up to the time of the present writing, this example of the art of the great Florentine's school draws hundreds of visitors who, in its absence, would be obliged to content themselves with the same things that were in the museum before it was closed, less the larger part of the pictures in the loan collection.

There is, on first entering, a look of novelty in the collections of the first floor, barring always the Cypriote objects, which are too well placed already to make any change in their arrangement desirable; but on a closer examination it will be found that this novelty is an appearance only, resulting from the fact that there has been a general change-about of the cases, and that a good many of them have been removed to the basement, the sunny, southern side of which is now transformed into a large, well-lighted and comfortable room. Here are placed the casts of Egyptian sculptures, a small but interesting and valuable collection, the gift of Mr. Drexel, and the casts of architectural details and of sculpture of the Greek, Mediæval and Renaissance periods presented by Mr. R. M. Hunt. There is no proper place for the exhibition of these casts, which are hung for the present on the south wall of the room, where, with the exception of a few that are placed on the sides of the piers, they receive no direct light and miss of their effect. This is a pity, because the casts are of some value, and if well placed would be useful to students. Mr. Hunt's gift makes a foundation for such a collection of architectural casts as ought to be owned by a museum, and it is to be hoped that other liberal-minded friends of the institution will continue the work he has so well begun. It may be, and probably will be, many years before we have here in New York such a collection of casts as the English have at South Kensington, but there is no reason why we should not begin with as good a collection as they have in Boston in the Art Museum there. We have the man here, now resident among us, who was the most active and alert instrument in gathering together the rich Boston array of architectural casts, and we wish his industrious and learned hands might find work to do here of the same kind.

In cases lining one side of the basement are objects manufactured by the aborigines of this continent, and in cases in the middle of the room a complete collection of the fictile ivories (casts imitating in texture and color the original ivories) published by the Arundel Society. These objects are all easily seen and enjoyed, with the exception of the drawback of ineffective lighting we have mentioned in the case of the Hunt casts—the Egyptian casts are thoroughly well placed—and a pleasant and instructive hour, many hours, in fact, may be passed in this part of the building.

It is hard to say it, but it certainly seems to be true, that there is much less to be learned and enjoyed on the main floor of the building where, of course, one would expect to find the best things, than is to be learned and enjoyed either in the galleries or in the basement. Our opinion is well known as to the present value of the Cesnola collection, and we have no wish to speak of it at present. Brief mention too will suffice for the statuary, which we never see without mortification. Our only solace in looking at the ridiculous new statue "The Thief," by an Italian hand, is that it shows our own sculptors have not touched bottom as one might fear in looking at such of their works as are collected here. With the Scotch abortion, the statue of Robert Burns, in the Park, outside—how can any Scotchman see without indignation his country's greatest man of genius so insulted!—and with this other statue from the land of Michael Angelo within the museum, we can look with better patience upon the forcible feebleness of Mr. Story, and the platitudes of the late Mr. Powers. Nevertheless, most heartily do we wish that the owners of these unfortunate marbles would kindly take them home.

To turn to something pleasanter—the Charvet collection of Roman glass will always be found worth studying, and no matter what additions may be made to it in the future, it will hold its place, and more, for it must increase in value as specimens of this antique art are more and more absorbed by public museums. As

for the Venetian glass presented by Mr. Jarvis, we have only to say that it is not worthy a place in any public museum—think of finding in South Kensington some of these pieces, the large mirror for instance, lying on its back in one of the cases—and that it is quite worthy of the companionship of the collection of drawings by the old masters which discredit us upstairs. In fact, it is a simple, easily demonstrated fact, that if all were taken out of the museum that has no right whatever to a place in it, there would be no reason whatever in the demand we hear for an addition to the present building. There is room enough here and to spare for all that the museum possesses of real value.

The King collection of gems is another valuable possession, but it is not properly arranged. It can neither be studied, nor can the colors of the gems be enjoyed so long as they are laid upon the opaque ground of velvet on which they are at present placed. Castellani showed us the way to exhibit gems when he placed those belonging to his collection in an upright screen of dark velvet, into which the gems were set so that we looked through them as through so many little windows, and could enjoy at once both the design and the color. It is a pity that the museum collection should not have the advantage of a sensible arrangement; we lose much enjoyment by the present mode of showing it.

The legacy of the late Mr. Phoenix, so much talked of, proves greatly disappointing, as those who knew the objects before they were shown to the public, said would be the case. Compared with even the small collection of Japanese objects in the gallery upstairs belonging to Mr. R. E. Moore, the things presented by Mr. Phoenix will be found of inferior beauty and of far less artistic value; they belong to the showy and vulgar side of Japanese handicraft. No doubt, they represent a good deal of money, but that is less a criterion in Oriental art, even to-day, than in some other matters. Apart from the Oriental objects left to the museum by Mr. Phoenix, the collection is a heterogeneous and commonplace one; it even includes some copies of mediæval objects and very poor copies too, in galvanoplasty. This collection ought to be thoroughly sifted out, and for the credit not only of the museum itself, but of the donor whose intentions were, no doubt, most liberal, only those objects should be retained which a museum of the pretensions of ours can, with propriety, exhibit to the public.

Upstairs there is but little change at the eastern end of the building or in the side galleries, where the Blodgett pictures and the Vanderbilt "drawings" still occupy the larger part of the space. The large painting attributed to Rubens, "The Return of Mary, Joseph, and the Child, from Egypt," has at last been transferred from the panel on which it was originally painted to canvas, and has survived the very skilfully performed operation. But certainly the painting is not worth the money and time it has cost. It is nothing in itself, and even if it be accepted as a work of Rubens, we must remember that the Flemish Jupiter sometimes nodded as well as the Greek one; and this picture is by no means one of his wide-awake ones. However, it is late in the day, to be questioning the value of the "pictures chiefly by old masters" in the museum.

Among the old pictures lent to the museum, Mr. Kellogg's so-called "Leonardo" easily holds the first place for its intrinsic beauty. On this score at all events it deserves a post of honor on these walls. If we might advise the trustees, we would suggest that the utterly absurd picture bearing a tablet on which Raphael's name is conspicuously written, should be removed from the gallery before the new painting, the "Madonna dei Candellabri," is exhibited to the public. Even without any name such a picture is a discredit to any wall it may hang upon, but nothing can be more ignorant than the putting Raphael's name to such a performance.

The loan collection of pictures amounts to little or nothing this year. It is always hard to collect pictures from our rich amateurs for a winter exhibition, since naturally they want their possessions to adorn their own houses, but whether the supply of pictures never yet loaned is exhausted, or for whatever reason, it has been found unusually difficult this year to collect good pictures, and in consequence, one of the rooms, the extreme western one is nearly empty, the space above a single line of pictures being filled up temporarily with some very commonplace tapestries. There are, however, some good pictures among those that have been lent; but among these good ones we cannot count the "Honorius" of the French painter, J. P. Laurens,

much talked of as it was when exhibited in the Paris Salon a year or two ago. How many a picture, the talk of a season, would be less enthusiastically judged if seen a few years later, and three thousand miles or so away from the place where it was painted!

Our visit to the museum at the present time suggests to us the remark that the great size of the building and the necessity the trustees seem to feel themselves under to fill it, no matter with what, is after all a great detriment to the museum and an injury to the public. Good, bad, and indifferent things are here packed in together and shown to the public as if of equal value. Persons whose studies and opportunities have educated them to discriminate may not be hurt by this confusion, but the mass of the public is seriously hurt, and anyway we are discredited abroad. Our museum cuts a pitiful figure even when compared with those of Boston and Washington; what then must strangers think of it who come to it fresh from the Louvre and from London? Now this discrediting would not be possible if the trustees would set their faces resolutely against accepting anything as a gift or on loan that is not first-rate of its kind. Then, even though the Museum were small, confined only to a few rooms, it would be respectable and its future would look bright. It would be an honor to have one's gifts or loan accepted by an institution which showed itself jealous of its character. But our museum is at once too presuming and too easy-going.

## My Note Book.



THE Salmagundi Sketch Club perhaps has never had a better exhibition than that now open at the National Academy of Design. This is equal to saying that probably nowhere has there been a better exhibition of the kind, which is not extravagant praise; for such a collection of new works in black-and-white is almost an American specialty. Similar exhibitions, it is true, are held in London periodically; but they do not com-

pare in interest with ours; for they are made up almost entirely of the originals of pictures which have been published in the London illustrated journals. The Salmagundi shows fewer of such drawings than at any previous exhibition. There is indeed no need of padding. What few there are of this kind are decidedly interesting—the original drawings, for example, of the splendid wood-engravings in Harper's "Christmas," a few of those in Osgood's holiday book, "The Lady of the Lake," a little collection of F. O. C. Darley's beautiful wash drawings, and four of Du Maurier's wonderful pen-and-inks well known to us all through Punch. These latter are worth careful study. The artist draws on rough white paper with apparently an ordinary pen, and gives the engraver every line that is to appear in the woodcut. If the actinic processes were as good in England as they are in this country there would be no need for an engraver to touch a drawing so perfectly adapted for photographic reproduction.

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THE name "Monochrome" exhibition gives a truer idea of the character of the pictures and sketches shown at the Academy building than the term "black-and-white." Really, only a small proportion comes strictly under the latter category. The term monochrome as used in its more elastic sense, would include Blashfield's capital sketch in oils of the unhappy little girl at her music lesson; J. A. S. Monks' vigorous sheep and goats, in curiously combined mediums; Smedley's oil study of an old farmer surveying his broken fence; Mrs. Odenheimer Fowler's pretty faces, in red oils (called somewhat arbitrarily, "Astra," "Amphitrite," etc.), Sarony's charcoal sketches on tinted grounds; Nehlig's and Shelton's wash drawings; Bicknell's monotypes—indeed everything in the exhibition.



I HAVE only half indicated the variety of mediums employed by the artists represented. At an exhibition like this much latitude may be allowed—the limit assuredly has been reached with Mr. Lauber's metal plaque—but at the forthcoming annual water-color exhibition it is to be hoped that pictures showing such dreadful mixtures as some of these will find no place on the walls. A new medium, by the way—or rather an old one revived—is coming into vogue among some of the American society artists. I speak of pastel painting. It is an open secret that Chase, Blum, Dielman, and half a dozen others are to give a special exhibition in pastels next spring.

BUT I am sadly digressing from the subject of the Salmagundi exhibition. Talking of the queer mixtures of mediums, I must notice the graceful "Lovers" by J. Wells Champney, which seems to be a wash of sepia with charged lines in crayon. Many good things in the exhibition are done in oils. Illustrators for The Century and Harper's Magazine generally produce their models in this way for the engravers, and, it being an easy way of working, other Salmagundians who do not contribute to those publications now freely adopt it. Among the best examples are Percy Moran's "An Old Time Melody," a young woman seated at the piano; Charles Volkmar's cattle "Coming Home" and "Montigny," a view of a ruined abbey, with lowing cattle treading the water in the foreground; F. M. Gregory's spirited "Jack and Gill," and "The Truant" school-girl. C. Y. Turner surely made a mistake in producing his "First Day Morning" in colossal size. He asks a thousand dollars for it, I see—a very modest price for an inflated sketch.

AFTER all, though, artistically considered the most interesting things in the collection are the charcoal sketches of Walter Shirlaw and Frank W. Currier. So much space is devoted in this number to the first-named gentleman, that it is only necessary here to mention him. Mr. Currier is delightful; because in black-and-white he is comprehensible. When he produces his impressions from nature in water-colors, it is his custom, I am informed by one who has seen him work, to put his paper on the ground, dip a brush into a convenient puddle and after well soaking the paper, pinch the desired colors directly on to it from the tubes and let them find their level; and it must be said that the "impressions" in water-colors Mr. Currier used to exhibit gave the impress of truth to this description. But in black-and-white, as I said, he is comprehensible. He is more indeed, he is full of power, not to say of genius. His views in "Schleisheim Park" and his "House at Schleisheim Park" are the strongest studies from nature, in charcoal, I have ever seen.

THERE is much good work in the exhibition which, but for lack of space here, might be mentioned more fully than is possible now. I must be content with simply naming the artists: J. F. Murphy, F. W. Kost, Frank Millet, Macdonald, Brundage, Frank Fowler, Hamilton Gibson, H. P. Share, A. M. Turner, Bruce, Crane, Harry Chase, and H. G. Plumb. F. S. Church has a "Mermaid" in a sea-green frame of marine design—there is more picture on the frame, by the way, than inside it—and a characteristically humorous study for an etching. George W. Maynard's "Dancers" and "Bough Apples"—the latter a young woman in an orchard—are better than his "Autumn," "Zephyr," and similar emblematic females, who apparently were all drawn perfectly erect, from the life model, and subsequently furnished perfunctorily with clouds, draperies, and other accessories, to meet allegorical requirements. There is little to be said in praise of the American etchings. Excepting the always beautiful landscapes of Henry Farrer, the "Sheep Pasture" by B. Lander, H. M. Rosenberg's Rico-like "Public Square" and one or two others, they are poor performances. The New York Etching Club will exhibit with the Water-Color Society, when, doubtless, as usual we shall have a representative display.

THERE was much unmerited "puffing" in the daily papers of the Truax collection of paintings, which was further given an air of importance by the publication of an illustrated catalogue containing etchings of some of the pictures. The truth is that, although many of the best modern artists were represented in the collection, there were certainly not half a dozen of the canvases

at all worthy of the reputations of the painters. Nearly all the pictures with the great names were unimportant and uninteresting. The whole lot of eighty odd brought less than thirty-three thousand dollars.

A RECENT exhibition of pictures at the Lotos Club brought to view several notable American paintings not seen before in New York. Walter Shirlaw had two portrait heads—one, of an old man, admirably modelled, and in tone like a Titian—and a panel of flowers in a picturesque vase, excellent in color. W. T. Richards sent, through Mr. Avery, "The Open Sea," one of his best works. The surging motion of the waters, in the middle distance especially, is powerfully expressed, affording a delightful contrast with the fleecy lightness of the receding cloud-forms as they melt away as they near the horizon. The sense of distance altogether is admirable. This picture occupied a place of honor in the rear room. The centre of the chief panel in the front room was given to M. F. H. De Haas's excellent marine "Off Marble Head," Arthur Quartley sent his interesting "Moonlight on the Sound," C. Y. Turner's charming "Dorothy Fox," a pretty Quaker maiden at her needlework by the open window, was greatly admired, as was also his water-color "Springtime," a pretty girl gathering flowers. His large study "The Grandmother" has the basis of a fine picture. Robert Blum sent a water-color—one of his tender canal views at Venice—and so did Joseph Lyman, Jr., his "Marblehead Town Hall," which has been acquired by the club.

IT was in landscapes and portraits, however, that the exhibition was strongest. Thomas Moran was best represented by his large view on the English river Stour; Charles H. Miller probably never painted a better landscape than his "At the Head of Little Neck Bay." Robert C. Minor was represented by "Eventide," a masterly transcript from nature, tenderly conceived and admirably executed, and "The Hill Side," which he exhibited at the London Royal Academy. George Inness sent a small landscape more interesting to artists than the public. W. S. Macy had a river scene and a "Winter Sunset," (introducing a tired horseman) which latter shows him at his best. Mr. F. W. Kost, a pupil of his, sent a little picture of decided promise. Charles H. Chapin, who sent a "Maud Muller" and a good study of a head, was also represented by a pupil, Mr. L. S. Cohen.

IN the portraits sent to the club there would have been quite a friendly rivalry between Carroll Beckwith, Alden Weir, and Chase, but for the disaster which befell the latter in the total destruction by fire of his admirable life-size portrait of Peter Cooper, early in the morning previous to the exhibition. The fire, caused by the igniting of the drapery on the walls, was checked before it made much headway, but not before it had also destroyed a landscape by J. W. Alexander and irretrievably ruined Carolus Duran's superbly colored "Eastern Lady," noticed in THE ART AMATEUR last month, owned by Mr. Avery; a large picture of still life by F. M. Gregory; a small one called "Lobster Fishing" by Burns; and J. H. Beard's "Kittens."

THE other two portraits of note were of a sedate, dignified-looking Southern iron-master by Weir and a handsome, dashing-looking young woman by Beckwith. A greater contrast could hardly have been found. Both subjects evidently were characteristically treated—the first in the sombre, almost severe coloring of Mr. Weir; the second in the "stunning"—may I go further and, without offence, say the "cheeky"—coloring of Mr. Beckwith. The first shows the sitter with his black coat fading into the dark background, like a Bonnat; the second a lady in rich blue velvet placed immediately against an uncompromising crimson background—like Beckwith and no one else. The color is somewhat subdued by the use of a dull silvered frame; and, with all its boldness it must be admitted that the picture is the clever work of a clever artist.

HARPER'S "Christmas" is a remarkably handsome publication. But is it not brought forward just a little too aggressively for good taste, as a rival of the London publications of the same character? In the very size of its pages, which are unwieldy, it seems to say: "See! I'm bigger than you!" Christmas is so much more an English observance than American that

it is not strange that the most striking pictures in the publication bearing upon this season, lack originality in idea, and bring to mind pictures that have appeared in past years in The Illustrated London News and The Graphic. This certainly is true of C. V. Reinhart's very strongly composed and admirably drawn mariners "Making Home for Christmas" and Frederick Dielman's "Decorating the Church with Evergreens" (reproduced in miniature in Harper's Magazine). "A Girl I Know," by Dielman, makes a charming frontispiece. E. A. Abbey's "Petrus Stuyvesant" is better than his female figure, "Winter," who, by actual measurement, he will find is no less than nine heads high. The tendency here indicated of following the publishers' determination to do everything on a large scale extends to George H. Boughton, another contributor, whose "Maiden" accompanying old Stuyvesant is no less than eight heads high. Chase's "Burgomaster" is admirably drawn, and, like all the other illustrations here named, is splendidly engraved. Justice can hardly have been done, I should think, in the reproduction of J. Alden Weir's "A Little Sabot." The original drawing of F. Hopkinson Smith's "A Snowy Day," which may be seen at the Salmagundi Exhibition, is certainly much more beautiful and refined in sentiment than the engraver's interpretation of it. On the other hand, Quartley's characteristics in his "Moonlight on the Sea-shore" seem to have been well appreciated by the engraver Yuengling; and Vedder's double-page supplement, "Sansone," has decidedly gained under the burin of Cole. This curious head is strongly drawn; but it is singularly unattractive. It really means nothing. There is not a feature in the face suggestive of the Hebraic origin of Samson, and the insignificant nose and mouth are those rather of a woman than a man. I would like to ask Mr. Vedder, in the strictest confidence, if it is not a fact that he originally drew this as a fancy head, and, liking it, fitted it into its present emblematic frame with broken pillars, shorn locks and all, and called it Samson—I beg pardon, I mean "Sansone." Really, it looks so.

MORE creditable to Mr. Vedder's imagination is his charming design for the cover of this publication, effectively printed in blue and white on a warm gray ground. On a rectangular plaque is shown the profile of a man's face thrown upon the silvery disk of the moon, which is partly hidden by dark floating clouds. Around this is a border of mistletoe.

PRANG'S prize Christmas cards are before me. For the most part they are very attractive, but one cannot look at them without smiling at the seeming simplicity of the publishers in paying thousands of dollars for what one would think might just as well have been bought for a few hundreds. Miss Dora Wheeler's design of a ragged mother and little ones, dazed by the brilliant vision in the heavens of the Virgin and Infant Jesus, which won the prize of two-thousand dollars, is certainly the most original and it is very well executed. But the more popular cards will probably be the less expensive ones of Frederick Dielman, a choir of well-to-do children singing anthems under the shadow of a Christmas tree, and Walter Satterlee, poor little carolers in the snow joined by a friendly group of cherubs.

HUBERT HERKOMER is painting a presentation portrait for the Lotos Club of Whitelaw Reid, its President. The exhibition of this artist's portraits at Knoedler's attracted much favorable comment. The general impression of the critics seemed to be that while Mr. Herkomer's work shows more character than is usually found in that of our best American portraitists, one of the latter is greatly his superior, in technical qualities at least.

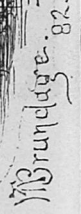
AS the time approaches for the trial of the Feuardent-Cesnola case it is clear that the partisans of the accused Director of the Metropolitan Museum are getting very much alarmed. A Boston paper declares that the trustees are prepared to spend \$100,000, if necessary, in the defence of their colleague. Why should such a sum be needed? Mr. Feuardent accuses Mr. Cesnola of slandering him. If he fails to establish the charge, surely the Director can be acquitted without the need of such a lavish expenditure of money. And if the charge be proven, surely \$100,000 or ten times that sum will not prevent justice from taking its course.

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SALMAGUNDI EXHIBITION SKETCHES.

ARRANGED BY F. M. GREGORY. (SEE "MY NOTE-BOOK," PAGE 28.)